The Infallibility of the Prophets in the Qur’ãn

By:

Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi

Published by:

Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania

P. O. Box 20033

Dar es Salaam

Tanzania

II S. M. Rizvi

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

In The Name of Allãh,
The Beneficent, The Merciful



Title: The Infallibility of the Prophets in the Qur'ãn
Author: Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi
Printer & Publisher: Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania
First Edition: 2005 / 1416
Copies: 2500
ISBN 9987 620 40 X
Size: A 5
Number of Pages: 48

BILAL MUSLIM MISSION OF TANZANIA
P. O. Box 20033
Dar es Salaam
Tanzania
Tel: 2120111 / 2112419
Fax: ++ 251-22-2116550
E-mail: bilal@cats-net.com / bilal@raha.com

Contents

VI S. M. Rizvi

FOREWARD



Since the departure of Rais`ul-Mubaligheen Allamah Al-Haj Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi (r.a.) from this earthly abode in 2002, the Mission is grateful to Hujjatul Islam wal Muslimeen Al-Haj Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi (d.z.) for his wise guidance and advice.

The Mission is grateful to Maulana Rizvi for his valued contribution. This is not the first book by Maulana Rizvi, we are printing. We have already published three of his most valuable studies in the past two years and we hope he will, by will of Almighty Allah, be able to send us more.

A sinful person, a transgressor of moral laws or a man dubious morality or respectability cannot be trusted and/or believed, as his own character is questionable. It is very pertinent, therefore that a prophet or Imam should be sinless and his character impeccable.

Our holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) proved himself as as-Sadiq and al-Ameen among his people i.e. "truthful" and "trustworthy."

History has recorded that he asked his people that 'if I tell you that there is an army beyond these mountains who are about to attack you, would you believe me?' they all replied in unison "Yes we believe you because you have proved yourself as-Sadiq and Al-Ameen.

His enemies called him a magician and gave him all other names but they could never call him a liar, as he had proved himself a man of integrity and trustworthiness.

Allah (s.w.t.) in the Holy Qur'ãn eulogises his Prophet in the following words "*Verily there is for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern (of conduct")*, 33:21; the real excellence and the matchless beauty of his divinely moulded conduct and character.

"The Infallibility of the Prophets in the Qur'ãn" by Hujjatul Islam wal Muslimeen Al-Haj Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi is an elaborated and serious treatise based on lectures he had delivered to the weekly classes on Islamic Theology.

I trust that the readers will benefit very much on the concept of "*Ismah*" in the light of the Qur'ãn.

F. H. Abdullah
Founding Member & Trustee
Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania

PREFACE

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
الحمد لله رب العالمين
و الصلاة و السلام على
سيد النبيين و خاتم المرسلين محمد و آله الطاهرين

Muslims consider *‘i¥mah,* infallibility, as an important quality for the person who holds the position of prophethood. This quality is not confined to the Prophet of Islam, Mu¦ammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) but is also found in all the prophets and messengers of God who came before Islam.

However, there are some verses of the Qur’ãn that apparently imply that Prophet Ãdam and some other prophets had committed sins. This treatise is an attempt to study the concept of *‘i¥mah* in light of the Qur’ãn.

This treatise is an expanded version of the lectures that I had given to the weekly classes on Islamic theology at Toronto in 1995. I pray and hope that this serves as a small but important step in studying the Qur’ãn from the thematic approach.

Rabbanã taqabbal minna, innaka Samí‘u ’d-du‘ã’.

December 2001 / Shawwãl 1422
Toronto Sayyid M. Rizvi

1. The Definition of *‘I¥mah*

The word *‘i¥mah* (عِصْمَةٌ) literally means “protection”. In Islamic terminology, it means “infallibility”. Infallibility is defined as “a spiritual grace *(lu§f* لُطْفٌ) of Allãh to a person which enables him to abstain from sins by his own free will.”[1]

A person who has been given that grace of God is called a *ma‘¥ūm* (مَعْصُوْمٌ), infallible, sinless.

This power of *‘i¥mah* does not make the *ma‘¥ūm* person incapable of committing sins. A *ma‘¥ūm* refrains from sins and mistakes by his power and will. If it were otherwise, then there would be no merit in being *ma‘¥ūm*! A *ma‘¥ūm* is able to abstain from sins because of (a) highest level of righteousness, and (b) ever-present consciousness and love for God, and (c) certain knowledge about the consequences of committing sins.

We come across some ordinary people who are very upright in their character and would not even dream of committing certain sins or crimes. The strength of their character makes them *relatively* an infallible person. For example, it is within the power of any person to go naked on the streets. But would a person who was brought up as a good Muslim, ever think of doing so? No, because it is far below his dignity to behave in this way. It is not impossible for him to do so, but he will never even imagine of doing

---

[1] Al-Muf¢d, *Ta¥¦¢¦u ’l-I‘tiqãd,* p. 128 (in vol. 5 of *Mu¥annafãtu ’sh-Shaykhi ’l-Muf¢d,* Qum, 1413 AH); al-°illi, *al-Bãbu ’l-Hãdi ‘Ashar,* p. 179 (Qum: Nashr Navid Islam, 1367 [solar] with Persian translation by A.R.A. Bakhshãishi); also see its English by W.M. Miller (London: Luzac & Co, 1958) p. 58-59

so. Why? Because he has been taught and brought up with the idea that such behaviour will tarnish his honour and is beneath the dignity of a civilized human being.

Similarly, though a *ma'¥ūm* has the ability to commit sin, he never even imagines of committing a sin because (a) the love for God in his heart leaves no room for displeasing Him by committing sins, and (b) he is full aware of the consequences of committing sins.

2. Muslims & the Belief in *'I¥mah*

Although the majority of Muslims believe in the *'i¥mah* of the prophets, there is a great difference about the extent of their '*i¥mah*.

1. Sunni Muslims: As far as the Sunnis are concerned, they have a great difference of opinion among themselves. Their views are as the followings:

- On lying & infidelity *(kufr):* all Sunnis believe that prophets could not tell a lie, neither intentionally nor by mistake, nor could they be infidel before or after the declaration of their prophethood.
- Other sins intentionally: all Sunnis believe that the prophets could not commit other sins intentionally.
- Major sins unintentionally: majority believes that the prophets could commit such sins; however, a minority says that this is not possible.
- Minor sins: majority believes that the prophets could commit minor sins, though not such

minor sins which would disgrace them in public's eyes.[2]

2. Shí'a Ithnã-'Ashariyyah Muslims: The Shí'as Muslims believe that all the Prophets were *ma'¥ūm*, sinless and infallible; they could commit no sin—neither a major sin nor a minor sin; neither intentionally nor inadvertently; and this applies to them from the beginning to the end of their lives.

This is the belief of the Shí'a Ithnã-'Ashariyyah. Below are three quotations from the Shí'a scholars of early days to the present century that shows the consistency of this belief among the Shí'as.

Shaykh Abu Ja'far a¥-¯adūq, a scholar born during the Minor Occultation *(ghaybat ¥ughra)* of the Present Imam and died in 381 AH, says: "Our belief concerning the prophets, apostles, Imams and angels is that they are infallible *(ma'¥ūm),* purified from all defilement *(danas),* and that they do not commit any sin, whether it be minor or major...He who denies infallibility to them in any matter appertaining to their status is ignorant of them. Our belief concerning them is that they are infallible and possess the attributes of perfection, completeness and knowledge, from the beginning to the end of their careers..."[3]

'Allãmah Ibn Mu§ahhar al-°illi (d. 728 AH) writes the following on prophecy: "He is immune to sin from the first of his life to the last of it."[4]

Shaykh Mu¦ammad Ri¤ã al-Mu¨affar, a famous Shí'a scholar of the first half of this century, writes:

---

2 See al-Qã¤i 'Abdu 'l-Jabbãr, *Shar¦u 'l-U¥ûli 'l-Khamsah,* p. 573-575; al-Qawshaji, *Shar¦u 't-Tajríd,* p. 464.

3 A¥-¯adūq, *al-I'tiqadãt,*p. 96 (in vol. 5 of *Mu¥annafãtu 'sh-Shaykhi 'l-Muf¢d*); the above quotation is based on its English translation, *A Shi'ite Creed,* A.A.A. Fyzee, tr. (Tehran: WOFIS, 1982) p. 87.

4 Al-°illi, *al-Bãbu '-°ãdi 'Ashar,* p. 179; in its English translation, see p. 58.

"We believe that all the prophets are infallible...Infallibility means purity from all sins, both major and minor ones, and from mistakes and forgetfulness."[5]

3. Why *'I¥mah*?

The prophets have to be *ma'¥ūm* for the same reason for which they were sent: to guide and lead the people towards God. God, who decided to guide mankind, also intended to send immaculate and perfect human beings as models and examples. If they were not *ma'¥ūm*, then it would have been extremely difficult even to believe in the message let alone the example they present to us. There would be no trust or confidence in whatever they say: it could be true; it could be false.

Sending fallible prophets would have defeated the very purpose for which they were sent: for the prophets to lead and guide, for the people to follow and obey.

* * *

The Qur'ãn also supports this reasoning.

The 1st Verse:

وَ مَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُوْلٍ إِلاَّ لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللهِ

"We did not send any prophet, except so that he may be obeyed by the will of Allah." (4:64)

The verse very clearly presents the divine social order: the sole purpose of the prophets on this earth is to be obeyed by their followers, not that the followers are to check every action and statement of their

---

5 Al-Mu¨affar, *'Aqã'idu 'l-Imãmiyyah,* (Qum: Ansariyan, n.d.) p. 53-54; also see its translation, *The Faith of Shi'a Islam* (London: Muhammadi Trust, 1982) p. 21.

prophet and then decided whether they should obey or not.

Such absolute obedience cannot be possible unless the prophets were *ma'¥ūm*, free from sins and mistakes.

The 2nd Verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا, أَطِيْعُوْا اللهَ وَ أَطِيْعُوْا الرَّسُوْلَ...

"O you who believe!
Obey Allah and obey the Messenger..." (4:59)

In this verse, Allãh is ordering us to obey Him and the Messenger. There are at least ten other verses where Allãh has used imperative forms to order the believers to obey the prophets and messengers. Besides these verses, there are also many verses where Allah describes the virtue of obeying the prophets, and the dire consequences of disobeying them.[6]

Secondly, in most such verses, Allãh has mentioned obedience to Himself alongside with the obedience to His messengers. Actually, in one verse, obedience to the messenger is made synonymous with the obedience to Allãh:

> *"And whoever obeys the Messenger has actually obeyed Allah."* (4:80)

Such assertion on part of Allãh would have been impossible if the prophets and the messengers were not *ma'¥ūm* and infallible. Otherwise, we would have found ourselves in an impossible situation: a non-*ma'¥ūm* prophet or messenger exhorts us to do something which is wrong—should we follow or not. In both cases, we would be doomed. If we obeyed the prophet and committed the sin, then we would be guilty of disobeying Allãh who has told us not to commit sins. If we disobeyed the prophet and refused to commit the sin, then we would be guilty of

---

6 See the following verses of the Qur'ãn: 4:14; 48:7; 33:66.

disobeying Allãh who has told us to obey the prophets and messengers in an absolute way!

The 3rd Verse:

To the above verses, add those verses in which Allãh forbids you to obey certain types of people who commit sins:

فَلاَ تُطِعِ الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ...وَ لاَ تُطِعْ كُلَّ حَلاَّفٍ مَهِيْنٍ...مَنَّاعٍ لِلْخَيْرِ مُعْتَدٍ أَثِيْمٍ

"So do not obey those who accuse you of lying...& do not obey any mean swearer...forbidder of good, one who steps beyond the limits, a sinner." (68:8-10)

وَ لاَ تُطِعْ مِنْهُمْ آثِمًا أَوْ كَفُوْرًا

"And do not obey among them a sinner or an ungrateful person." (76:24)

وَ لاَ تُطِيْعُوْا أَمْرَ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ

"And do not obey the command of the prodigals..." (26:151)

When you put these verses alongside the previous verses, you will get the complete picture:

(a) The prophets are to be obeyed unconditionally.
(b) The sinners and wrongdoers are not to be obeyed.
(c) The only logical conclusion is that the prophets are not in the categories of the sinners or the wrongdoers.

4. Humanism & Infallibility

A few Muslims intellectuals, swayed by the idea of humanism, relativity and pluralism, wish to present the prophets and messengers of God as fallible in order to justify the moral weaknesses found among ordinary people.

This motive can also be observed in the early history of Islam when the scholars attached to the political establishments tried to water down the

infallibility of the Prophet in order to explain away the moral weakness and ethical wrongdoings of the rulers of their time. We have such examples in the modern era also.

Malcolm X, when he was a Minister in the Nation of Islam movement, describes how he attempted to justify the adultery of the self-proclaimed prophet, Elija Muhammad. He says:

> "I thought of one bridge that could be used if and when the shattering disclosure should become public. Loyal Muslims could be taught that a man's accomplishments in his life outweigh his personal, human weaknesses. Wallace Muhammad [Elija's son] helped me to review the Qur'ãn and the Bible for documentation. David's adultery with Bathsheba weighed less on history's scales, for instance, than the positive fact of David's killing Goliath. Thinking of Lot, we think not of incest, but of his saving the people from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Or, our image of Noah isn't of his getting drunk—but of his building the ark and teaching people to save themselves from the flood. We think of Moses leading the Hebrews from bondage, not of Moses' adultery with the Ethiopian women. In all of the cases I reviewed, the positive outweighed the negative."

When he described his damage control strategy to Elija Muhammad, the leader said, "Son, I a'm not surprised...You always have had such a good understanding of prophecy, and of spiritual things. You recognize that's what all of this is—prophecy. You have the kind of understanding that only an old man has. I a'm David...When you read about how David took another man's wife. I'm that David. You read about Noah, who got drunk—that's me. You read

about Lot, who went and laid up with his own daughters. I have to fulfill all of those things."[7]

Tom Harpur, a theologian, an ex-Minister of the Church, and a columnist of the religious column of the *Toronto Star*, wrote the article "Not even Jesus claimed infallibility" on 2nd May 1993. Once Jesus was stripped of infallibility, I was not at all surprised to see Harpur taking the second step of publishing another article a year latter entitled as "Gospels could support speculation that Jesus might have been gay."[8]

This is what happens when you take away the infallibility from the prophets and the messengers of God! Instead of looking up to them as models and guides, people —especially those in position of power— justify their own immoral behaviour and lifestyle by presenting the prophets as fallible and sinners.

5. The Allegorical Verses of the Qur'ãn

After explaining the meaning and importance of *'i¥mah* for the prophets and messengers of Allah which is also supported by the Qur'ãnic verses we quoted above, some people become confused when they come across verses which give an impression that Adam and other prophets committed some sins.

This confusion will only be clear if we realize that the Qur'ãnic verses, according to the Qur'ãn itself, are of two types:

> He is the one who sent upon you the book: some of its verses are clear *(mu¦kamât)*—these are the basis of the Book, while others are allegorical

---

7 A. Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (NY: Ballantine Books, 1964) p. 297-299.

8 See *The Toronto Star,* May 2, 1993, p. B5; May 15, 1994, p. A13.

(mutashâbihât). As for those in whose hearts is perversity, they follow the allegorical verses, seeking to mislead and seeking to give (their own) interpretation. None know their (i.e., allegorical verses') interpretation except Allah and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge... (3:7)

Those who do not differentiate between the clear and the allegorical verses will surely get confused when they apparently find two conflicting messages from the verses of the Qur'ãn. The issue of *'i¥mah* is one of those issues in which people have become victim of confusion.

* * * * *

The situation, at this stage of our discussion, is as follows:

1. Our earlier discussion concluded that the divine guides must be immaculate and above reproach.
2. Many verses of the Qur'ãn support this view, as mentioned above.
3. But there are some verses of the Qur'ãn that apparently attribute sins and wrongdoings to some prophets.

What should be done?

We must accept those verses that are supported by our reason as the clear *(mu¦kamât)* verses. And the other verses should be considered allegorical *(mutashâbihât)* and their true meaning must be sought in the light of the *mu¦kamât,* the teachings of the Prophet, and the Imams of Ahlul Bayt who are the twin of the Qur'ãn by virtue of the famous saying of the Prophet that "I am leaving two precious things among you [for guidance]: the Book of Allah and my Ahlu 'l-bayt."[9]

---

[9] Ibn °ajar al-Makki, *as-Sawã'iqu 'l-Mu¦riqah,* chapter 11, section 1.

In the next lesson, we will study those verses and see how can we interpret them and, at the same time, hold on to our belief in the infallibility of the prophets.

6. The Case of Adam (a.s.)

It will help us greatly if we, first of all, study the verses of the Qur'ãn about the creation of Adam, his stay in Paradise, and his coming to the earth.

Chapter 2 (al-Baqarah) verses 30–39:

The Creation:

When your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to place a vicegerent on the earth," the angels said, "Will You place on the earth the one who shall act wickedly in it and shed blood; whereas we sing Your praise and glorify You?" Allah said, "Surely I know what you do not know."

And [after creating Adam] Allah taught Adam all the names. Then He presented those to the angels and said, "Tell me the names of these if you are true [in what your assumption that you are more superior than Adam]." They said, "Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us. You are surely the All-Knowing, the Wise." [Then] He said, "O Adam! Tell them the names of those [persons]." When Adam told them those names, Allãh said [to the angels], "Didn't I say to you that I know the unseen things of the heavens and the earth, and I know what you manifest and what you hide."

And [remember] when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before Adam." All of them prostrated except Iblis, who refused and was haughty, and [thus] he became one of the unbelievers.

In Paradise:

[After creating Hawwa}, We said, "O Adam, Dwell you and your wife in the Garden and eat from it [freely] as many [things] as you wish; but do not approach this tree, otherwise you will become one of the ¨*ãlimeen* اَلظَّالِمِيْنَ ."

But the Shaytãn made them slip (اَزَلَّهُمَا) from that [Garden by luring them to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree] and thus got them out from the state [of felicity] in which they had been.

So We said [to Adam, Hawwa, and the Shaytãn that, "All of you] get down [from the Garden to the earth] some of you being the enemies of the other, and there is on the earth your abode and the necessities [of life] for a [fixed period of] time."

[Adam felt ashamed and intended to ask Allah's forgiveness.] So Adam learnt some words from his Lord, and Allah turned to him mercifully (تَابَ عَلَيْهِ). Surely He is the Most-Forgiving, the Merciful.

We said, "All of you get down from the Garden. [Once you are on the earth], a guidance will certainly come to you from Me: whosoever follows My guidance, there will be no fear for them nor shall they grieve. But those who disbelieve and reject Our revelation, they are the inmates of the Fire, in it they shall abide."

Chapter 7 (al-A'râf) verses 19-25:

[Allah said,] "O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in the Garden and eat from wherever you wish; but do not approach this tree, otherwise you will become one of the ¨*ãlimeen* اَلظَّالِمِيْنَ ."

Then the Shaytãn instilled temptation into them so as to reveal to them their private parts that were hidden from them. He said, "Your Lord has only prohibited you from this tree lest you both become rulers, or lest you become immortals." [To ensure

that his temptation will work, the Shaytãn] swore to them both that, “Truly, I am a sincere adviser for you.” Thus he misled them by delusion.

So when they tasted [the fruit of] the tree, their private parts became manifest to them, and both of them started to cover themselves with the leaves of the Garden. Their Lord called out to them, “Did I not prohibit both of you from this tree and say to you that the Shaytãn is your open enemy?”

They said, “Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves (*¨alamnã* ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا); and if You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we shall surely be among the losers.”

Allah said, “Get down [to the earth], some of you being the enemies of the others; and there is on the earth your abode and necessities [of life] for a time.” He said, “Therein you shall live, therein you shall die, and from it you shall be raised [again].”

Chapter 20 (Ta Ha) verses 116-126:

And [remember] when We said to the angels, “Prostrate before Adam,” all of them prostrated except Iblis who refused and was haughty.

Therefore, We said, “O Adam! this [Shaytãn] is an enemy to you and your wife. So do not let him expel you from the Garden, otherwise you will be uncomfortable (تَشْقَى): in it [i.e., the Garden] you shall neither be hungry nor naked, and you shall neither be thirsty therein nor struck by the sun’s rays.”

But the Shaytãn instilled temptation to him by saying, “O Adam! Shall I guide you to the tree of immortality and a kingdom which will not decline?” When [they] both ate of that tree, their private parts became manifest to them and both of them started to cover themselves with the leaves of the Garden.

Adam disobeyed (عَصَى) his Lord, and so he erred (غَوَى). Then his Lord chose him, and then He turned to him and guided him.
[Then] Allah said [to Shaytãn and Adam], "You both get down from this [Garden}, some of you being the enemies of the other. [On the earth], a guidance will certainly come to you from Me, and then whosoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor will he be unhappy. But whosoever turns away from My reminder, then he shall surely have a wretched life and we shall resurrect him blind."

Review of Adam's Story

1. According to the experts of Islamic jurisprudence, the orders given by Allãh are of two types:

(a) *Al-amr al-mawlawi,* a legislative command. Such orders must be implemented; and, if someone disobeys such a command, then he is committing a sin and is liable to be punished. For example, the command to "say the daily prayers" or "do not eat the pork" is of such nature. Neglecting the daily prayers or eating of the pork is a sin and Allãh can rightly punish the sinner.

(b) *Al-amr al-irshãdi,* an advisory command. Such orders are of advisory nature; their purpose is to inform the people about its consequences. However, if someone disobeys such an order, then he is not committing a sin; of course, he will have to face the consequences of not following the advice. For example, the command to "say *bismillãh* when you slaughter the chicken" is of advisory nature. Now, if someone slaughters the chicken and neglects the saying of *"bismillãh,"* then has he committed a sin? No, he has not committed a sin nor is he liable for a

punishment for not saying the *"bismillãh"* at that time. However, he will lose the right to eat that chicken; that chicken cannot be eaten by a Muslim. Another example: a person comes to his doctor complaining of cough. The doctor advises his patient to drink a certain medicine, a cough syrup. Now if the patient ignores that advice, then he is not committing a sin or a crime; but he will surely suffer the consequence — his illness will be prolonged and his health might deteriorate.

Conclusion: not all commands of Allãh are of obligatory or prohibitive nature. The advice given to Adam and Hawwa was not of the legislative nature. It was not that that particular tree and its fruit themselves were forbidden. The prohibition of going near that tree and eating its fruit was *al-amr al-irshãdi.* And going against such an order is not a sin; at most, the doer will have to face the consequences of ignoring that advice. In case of Adam and his wife, the consequence they faced was cancellation of their tenure as guests of Allãh in the Paradise and its comforts. Remember that they were not supposed to stay in the Paradise forever; they were created for the earth, and their stay in the Paradise was meant to be temporary.

2. The Garden/Paradise is not **the place for test and trial.** It is this earth on which human beings have been destined to go through test and trial by obeying the commands of Allãh. The concept of sinning in case of human beings is connected to the worldly life.

In the story of Adam itself, Allãh makes this point clear when He orders Adam to go to the earth—He said, "You both get down from this [Garden], some of you being the enemies of the other. *[On the earth], a guidance will certainly come to you from Me, and then whosoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor will he be unhappy. But whosoever turns away from My reminder, then he shall surely have a*

wretched life and we shall resurrect him blind." (20:126)

The order given to Adam in Heaven is not same as the orders given to human beings in this world—it is disobedience of the orders given on this earth that constitutes sin.

Finally, the Shaytãn himself knows that he does not have the power to mislead the prophets, the messengers, and those who are graced with purity by Almighty Himself. When he was given respite by Allãh, he declared the following: *"So I swear by Your Might (O Lord) that I will surely mislead them all together* except *the devoted servants of Your's from among them."* (38:82-3; 15:39-40) And Allãh responds to him by saying, *"...As for my servants, you have no power over them except those who follow you from among the misled people..."* (15:41) The Satan himself knew the limitation of his influence upon the chosen servants of Allãh in this world.

3. Those who believe that Adam committed a sin, describe the eating of the forbidden fruit as the "sin" and Adam's expulsion from the heaven as the "punishment". However, this **relationship between the sin and its punishment** is not valid because of two reasons:

Firstly, Adam was destined to come to the earth anyway. Allãh had declared even before creating Adam that *"I want to place a vicegerent on the earth."* So coming of Adam to the earth is not a punishment; whether or not he ate the forbidden fruit, Adam would have come to the earth anyway. So that was not a punishment.

Secondly, if coming of Adam to the earth was a "punishment" of eating the forbidden fruit, then he should have been returned to the paradise after Allãh "forgave" him. Forgiveness means "canceling the punishment"—Adam should have been taken back to

the paradise. This did not happen, which proves that Adam's coming to the earth was not a "punishment"; and eating was not a "sin".

4. What about the words in the story Adam that imply that he committed sin?

After studying the issue of *'i¥mah* from the Qur'ãnic point of view, if we come across such words we have to interpret them in a way that they are in harmony with the other verses of the Qur'ãn. Now let us look at three such words that have occurred in the story of Adam.

First: the word "*¨ãlimeen* **اَلظَّالِمِيْنَ**" is from *¨ulm* **ظُلْمٌ**. This word has four meanings: (a) to put something in a wrong place; (b) to oppress; (c) to make haste; and (d) to come to harm.[10] We see that the last two meanings of the word are in harmony with what we explained about *'i¥mah.* For example, verse 2:35 would read like this:

> We said, "O Adam, Dwell you and your wife in the Garden and eat from it [freely] as many [things] as you wish; but do not approach this tree, otherwise you will be *one of those who put themselves into harm*."
>
> Here, "harm" would mean facing the difficulties of the earthly life and losing the comforts of the heaven.

or

> "...otherwise, you will be *one of those who make haste*." Here, "making haste" would mean that they were eventually to go to the earth but by eating from the forbidden tree they hastened their departure to a place where they will lose the comforts of the Garden.

---

[10] See *al-Munjid,* the famous Arabic dictionary that gives following meanings to *a¨-¨ulm:*

الجور, وضع الشيء في غير موضعه, كل ما أعجلته عن أوانه,

This meaning of the word *¨ãlimeen* **اَلظَّالِمِيْنَ** is supported by the next verse that says that the Shaytan "got them out from *the state [of comfort]* in which they had been." Also the verse 20:117 supports this interpretation: *"O Adam! this [Shaytãn] is an enemy to you and your wife. So do not let him expel you from the Garden, otherwise you will be uncomfortable: in it [i.e., the Garden] you shall neither be hungry nor naked, and you shall neither be thirsty therein nor struck by the sun's rays."* In other words, here food, clothing and shelter are readily provided for you; you will lose these comforts on the earth. Here everything is provided but there you will have to work for yourselves.

Second: the word **عَصَى** means "disobeyed". This does not necessarily imply sin because disobedience can be attributed to two types of commands: *al-amr al-mawlawi* (a legislative command) or *al-amr al-irshãdi* (an advisory command). If a person goes against the advisory command, then he has "disobeyed" but not "sinned". We have already explained that commands of Allah do not always have the force of obligation or prohibition. And, by keeping in mind those verses which prove the *'i¥mah,* we have no choice but to interpret this word as "disobeyed the advisory command".

Third: Similarly, the word **غَوَى** means "he erred". But this does not necessarily mean sin. It can easily be applied to *at-tarku 'l-awla* which is possible for a prophet to do. *At-tarku 'l-awla* (**اَلتَّرْكُ الأَوْلَى**) means "leaving the more appropriate behaviour". "Adam erred" would mean that even if the command of Allah did not carry the force of legislative prohibition, still Adam should have obeyed it. In disregarding the advisory command of Allah, Adam is guilty not of a sin but of not living up to the appropriate behaviour

which is expected from a prophet or messenger of God.

5. If Adam did not commit a sin, then why does Allãh talk about **repentance for Adam** and forgiveness from Himself, and uses so strong words as **الظالمين** and **عصى** etc?

Firstly, When a prophet like Adam commits *at-tarku 'l-awla,* it is quite appropriate for him to ask Allãh for pardon—not necessarily for a sin but for an inappropriate behaviour. So "repenting" does not necessarily mean that Adam must have committed a sin; it is quite appropriate rather advisable even after committing *at-tarku 'l-awla.*

Secondly, the use of harsh words by Allah in describing the story of Adam is acceptable by keeping in mind the status of Adam. Although Adam did not commit a sin, it was improper for him to adopt an inappropriate behaviour. The people with high ranks are expected to live by the standard that is higher than that of the normal human beings. As the saying goes: the virtuous deeds of the pious are considered 'sins' by those who are nearest to God — *¦asanâtu 'l-abrâr sayyi'âtu 'l-muqarrabīn.*

7. The Case of Prophet Ibrãhim (a.s.)

There are some verses in the Qur'ãn that apparently attribute sins and wrong doings to Prophet Ibrãhim (a.s.). We shall look at the three most important such examples.

Chapter 6 (al-An'ãm) verses 75-80:

[Remember] when Ibrãhim said to his uncle, Ãzar, "Do you take idols for gods? Surely I see you and your people in manifest error." Thus We were

showing Ibrãhim the kingdom of the heavens and the earth so that he might be of *(al-muqinin)* those who are sure [of their faith].

So when the night outspread over Ibrãhim, he saw a star; he said, "This is my Lord." But when the star set [in the morning,] he said, "[This cannot be my Lord because it has passed away,] I do not like the transitory [gods]."

[On the next night,] when he saw the moon rising, he said, "This is my Lord." But when the moon set he said, "If my Lord had not guided me, then I shall surely be of *(a¤-¤ãliyn)* the people who have gone astray."

[In the morning,] when Ibrãhim saw the sun rising, he said, "This must be my Lord [because] this is greater [than the star and the moon!]" But when the sun set, he said, "O my people, surely I am free from what you associate [with Allah.] I have sincerely turned myself to Him who originated the heavens and the earth, and I am not one of the polytheists."

Many historians of religion take Ibrãhim as the founder of the monotheistic idea. This definitely goes against the Islamic view that monotheism was the original faith of mankind from the days of Adam (a.s.), and that later on people became polytheists.

The Qur'ãnic statements quoted above have been used as a proof of the evolutionary phases in Ibrãhim from polytheism to monotheism. This is, obviously, an incorrect reading of the Qur'ãn.

1. This entire passage quoted above actually shows that Prophet Ibrãhim was actively engaged in combating idol- and nature-worshipping. Reading the whole passage does not raise any problem about the *'i¥mah* of Prophet Ibrãhim. He did not raise the possibility of the star, the moon and the sun being gods as a fact; it was raised only as a part of his

method of disproving such a possibility. In debates, it is quite common to initially accept the view of your opponent in order to lead him to your own view.

If you read the first part of the passage where Ibrãhim is disputing with his own uncle[11] against idol-worshipping and also Allãh's statement that "We were showing…so that he might be of those who are sure [of their faith]," it shows that he was a true believer before he engaged in debate with the idol- and nature-worshippers.

2. Even the passage where he says, "If my Lord had not guided me, then I shall surely be of the people who have gone astray," is a conditional statement. It says "if" and "then". And since the first part did not take place, therefore the second part is not relevant.

Chapter 21 (al-Anbiyã') verses 62-63:

In pursuant of his mission against idol-worshipping, Ibrãhim one day smashed all the all idols of the temple except the big one. Then the Qur'ãn says:

> [The idol-worshippers] said, "Who has done this to our gods? He surely must be one of the unjust people." [Some of them] said, "We have heard a youth speaking [ill] of them, and he is known as Ibrãhim."...
>
> [When Ibrãhim was brought to the king,] he said, "Rather it was this their leader that has done it—ask the [smashed idols] if they can speak."

* * *

---

[11] The Qur'ãn uses the word *"ab"* for Ãzar who was an idol-worshipper. He was not father of Ibrãhim; he was his uncle. Look at the following verse where he eventually disassociates himself from Ãzar: 9:114. On the other hand, we see that Ibrãhim, at the last stage of his life, prays for his *"wãlid,"* a word that is used for the real father. See verse 14:41.

The objection against *'i¥mah* is that if Ibrãhim was *ma'¥um,* how could he lie? Again, if we look at the entire passage, we see that Ibrãhim wanted to make his people realize that idols are not worth worshipping—if they cannot defend themselves or even talk, then how can they help you.

Secondly, Ibrâhím's answer is conditional: "...if they can speak." Ibrâhím's answer was rhetorical and intended to force the people to think. This becomes clearer from the following verse: 21:65-66

> ...They said, "You know that the idols do not speak." Ibrãhim said, "Well then, do you worship, besides Allah, [the idols] that neither benefit you in any way nor harm you."

Chapter 2 (al-Baqarah) Verse 260

> And [remember] when Ibrãhim said, "My Lord! Show me how You give life to the dead." Allah said, "What, do you not believe [in resurrection]?" He answered, "Certainly [I believe, I am asking this] so that my heart may be at ease."
> Allah said, "Take four of the birds...."

Some people use this incident as a proof that Ibrãhim did not believe in resurrection. This is absolutely incorrect. The question and answer are themselves very obvious that he believed. "Certainly [I believe]."

Then why did he ask for a demonstration of resurrection? Firstly, Ibrãhim surely believed in God's power of giving life to dead. However, this was a belief based on the revelation of Allãh just as we believe in it based on the information reached to us through the prophets and the Imams.

Secondly, Ibrãhim wanted to elevate the level of his belief from "information" to "demonstration". According to traditions, one day Ibrãhim saw a dead

fish, half in the water, the other half outside the water. He also saw that sea creatures were eating away one half of the fish and land animals were eating away the other half. This incident made Ibrãhim wonder about the issue of resurrection. We are using the word "wonder" not "doubt". This is when he had the desire of seeing a demonstration of Allãh's power of resurrection, and this also explains the way Allah asked him to kill and mix the parts of the four birds.

In conclusion, Ibrãhim believed in resurrection before as well as after this event. The difference is that his belief prior to this event was based on the information about the future revealed to him by God; whereas after this event, his belief in resurrection was based on visual demonstration done by him with Allãh's permission. This is similar to a Muslim who has been to hajj: before his journey, he believed that the Ka'bah existed; but the basis of his belief changed after his journey—now he has seen the Ka'bah with his own eyes.

(C) The Case of Prophet Músã (a.s.)

Chapter 28 (al-Qa¥a¥) Verses 15-16

And he entered the city at a time when its people were not aware [of his presence], and found therein two men fighting: one was from his party and the other was from his enemies. [When] the one who was his follower [saw Músã, he] cried out to him for help against the one who was from his enemies. So Músã [went and] struck him with his fist and killed him.

[Then Músã] said, "This is Shaytãn's deed (عَمَلِ الشَّيْطان); surely he is an open enemy who leads [others] astray." [Músã] said, "My Lord! I surely have been (ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِى) unjust to myself; therefore (فَاغْفِرْ لِى) forgive me." So [Allah] (غَفَرَ

ﷻ) forgave him; He is the Forgiving, the Merciful."

The common translation of the last verse combined with the statement about the Shaytãn creates conflict with the concept of *'i¥mah,* infallibility.

When reading these verses, keep the following points in mind:

1. What Músã did was not a crime; he went to help an oppressed person and, in the process, struck a blow with his fist at the oppressor. This ended, unexpectedly, in the death of the oppressor. Helping an oppressed person is a praiseworthy act in itself. The death of the oppressor, at most, can be labeled as accidental death that is not a crime or a sin.

2. Músã's words that "This is Shaytãn's deed" does not necessarily refer to his own action. Remember that the Shaytãn himself knew his limits; he says to Allah, "...I will certainly mislead them all together except the devoted servants of Your's from among them." (38:82-83) And Allãh says to the Shaytãn, "...As for my servants, you have no power over them except those who follow you from among the misled people...." (15:41) And Músã surely was not among the misled servants of Allãh!

So the sentence that "this is Shaytãn's deed" refers to the mischief started by the oppressor himself.

3. As for the sentence that "My Lord I have surely been unjust to myself," this must be interpreted in light of the meaning of *¨ulm* explained in the case of Prophet Adam (a.s.). Its correct translation would be: "My Lord I surely have put myself into harm" — after the accidental death of the oppressor, Músã was pursued by the people of Fir'awn.

4. Then how do you explain the sentence after that which says that *"ighfir lī"* which means "forgive me"

and *"ghafara"* which means that Allah "forgave him"?

Again, the common meaning of *ghafara* (forgiving) is not applicable here. The word *"ghafara"* also means "to watch over someone" or "to guard someone" or "to cover something [i.e., protect it]". This second meaning does not imply any sin; it just means that by accidentally killing the oppressor, Músã found himself in harm and trouble from the people of Fir'awn; and, therefore, he prays "...therefore, guard me and Allah guarded him."

This meaning of the last sentence is also supported by another verse of the Qur'ãn which quotes Allãh saying to Músã that, "...when you killed an [Egyptian] man [accidentally and were being pursued by Fir'awn's people], We delivered you from the worry..." (20:40) So the *¨ulm* is explained in this verse as "worry"; and *"ghafara"* is explained as "delivered".

* * *

(D) The Case of Prophet Yúnus (a.s.)

Another verse which is considered to be incompatible with the concept of *'i¥mah* is about Prophet Yúnus (a.s.).

Chapter 21 (al-Anbiyã') verses 87-88:

> And (remember) Yúnus, when he went away in anger; and he thought that We would never have power over him *(naqdira)*. Then he called in the darkness [of night, sea, and fish]: "There is no god but You, glory be to Thee; surely I am one of the unjust *(¨ãlimeen)*.
>
> So We responded to him and delivered him from the grief, and thus do We deliver the believers.

The common translation of the words *naqdira* and *¨ãlimeen* make these two verses incompatible with the concept of *'i¥mah*.

1. The first question against *'i¥mah* in this passage is about the action of Prophet Yúnus: he left his people when the punishment subsided without him knowing about it. Was Yúnus angry at Allãh?

The most that this verse says is that Yúnus went away in anger; it does not say that he was angry with Allãh. So we have no choice but to interpret this verse by saying that Yúnus left the people while he was angry with them for not believing him.

2. The second question is about the sentence: "He thought that We would never have power *(naqdira)* over him." Some people have taken the word *naqdira* in the meaning of "having power," thus imply that Yúnus went away in anger thinking that God "would never have power over him".

Firstly, if this meaning is to be taken seriously, then Yúnus would become a *kãfir,* an unbeliever!

Secondly, the word *naqdira* (which is from *qadr*) has been used many times in the Qur'ãn for "restricting of the provision" by Allãh. For example, in chapter 13, verse 26, Allãh says, "Allãh expands and straitens *(yaqdiru)* the provision for whomsoever He pleases." Or, for instance, in chapter 89, verses 15-16, Allãh says: "As for man: when his Lord tries him by treating him with honour and giving him an easy life, he says 'My Lords honours me.' But when He tries him by straitening *(qadara)* his provision for him he says, 'My Lord has disgraced me.'"

In conclusion, we can say that the first sentence of the passage under discussion means: And (remember) Yúnus, when he went away in anger; and he thought that We would never straiten [the provision] over him." This, at most, means that Yúnus thought that because he was God's prophet, his Lord would never

straiten his provision for him; he had taken Allãh's provision for granted. It has nothing to do with issue of Allãh having no power over him.

3. If Yúnus had committed no sin by leaving his people, then why did he say that, "surely I am one of the *¨ãlimeen,* the unjust"?

As mentioned earlier in the case of Prophet Adam (a.s.), the word *¨ulm* does not necessarily imply "injustice" and "sin". It also means "to make haste" and "to come to harm". Any of these two meanings are compatible with the concept of *'i¥mah* and also correct in the case of Prophet Yúnus.

The verse would then mean as follows: "There is no god but You, glory be to Thee; surely I am one of those who make haste" or "There is no god but You, glory be to Thee; surely I am one of those who come to harm".

This explanation is further supported by the next verse in which Allãh says, "So We responded to him and delivered him from the grief, and thus do We deliver the believers." The *¨ulm* mentioned in the prayer of Yúnus is explained by Allãh as "*al-ghamm*—grief", and not as sin or injustice; that is why Allah said "*najjaynã*—delivered" and not "forgiven".

(E) The Case of Prophet Mu¦ammad (s.a.w.)

Before we proceed further, it is advisable to refresh your memory by reading the first part of the discussion on '*i¥mah*, especially the verses which prove the infallibility of the prophets in general.

1st Verse: Chapter 93 (az-Zuha) verse 7:

> Did He not find you an orphan and so gave shelter? And find you ¤*ãlan* and so He guided? And find you in need and so made rich?

If the Prophet of Islam is infallible *(ma'¥ûm),* then why does Allãh say that He found him ¤*ãlan* which normally means "one who has gone astray" or "one who strays from the right path" or "one who is lost"?

First of all, the common meaning is not applicable here. In the normal usage of the word, it is applied for non-believers. But this meaning is negated by another verse of the Qur'ãn where Allãh says, "I swear by the star when it goes down, that your companion [i.e., Mu¦ammad] has not gone astray *(mã ¤alla),* nor does he err..." (53:1-2)

Secondly, even if we take it in the meaning of "lost" or "gone astray", it could be interpreted without denying the 'i¥mah of the Prophet: you can say that he was wandering in search of revelation.

Finally, the idea of being "lost" does not always have a negative sense to it. Read the following two sentences carefully: (1) "I was lost." (2) "The ring was lost." In the first sentence, there is a negative sense; but in the second sentence, there is no negative connotation to the ring that is lost. If we use the word "lost" for the Prophet in the second sense, then there should be no problem at all. We can then explain the verse as follows: "And [did not God] find you lost [among your people], and so He guided [them to you]."

The last interpretation is supported by 'Abdullãh ibn 'Abbãs, a close companion of the Prophet, and also by Imam 'Ali ar-Ri¤ã (a.s.).

2nd Verse: Chapter 48 (al-Fath) verses 2-3:

Verily We granted thee a manifest victory;
so that God may
[1] forgive thee thy sins of the past and those to follow,
[2] fulfill His favour to thee,
[3] and guide thee on the straight path,

[4] and that God may help thee with powerful help.

These verses were revealed in reference to the Treaty of °udaybiyya in which the Prophet made peace with unbelievers of Mecca in the year 6 A.H. The Prophet had gone with only 1400 lightly armed Muslims with the intention of doing the minor pilgrimage (‘*umrah*). The idol-worshippers of Mecca barred them from entering Mecca; after much discussion, they agreed to a ten years peace treaty with the Prophet.

Allãh described this peace treaty as a “manifest victory”. Then He goes on to explain why He gave this “manifest victory” to the Prophet. He gives three reasons: The first reason is very interesting as well as controversial.

“So that God may forgive thee thy sins
of the past and those to follow.”

This clearly implies that Prophet Mu¦ammad had committed sins in past and could commit sins in future; he was not a *ma‘¥ûm*.

* * *

The problem is that this interpretation of the verse creates other problems:

1. It goes against the verses we discussed earlier about ‘*i¥mah* in general.

2. The first reason, as commonly translated, seems out of place and irrelevant to the issue of the peace treaty. There is no clear connection between granting a manifest victory and forgiving of sins. Moreover, it would seem ridiculous to help a messenger to spread the word of Islam (“to submit to God’s laws”) and then grant absolute license for committing sins to that very messenger!

3. It would seem that in Islam, the Prophet is above the law: we are forbidden from committing sins but he is allowed!

* * *

In light of these problems with the common translation, many exegetists have attempted other interpretations: 1. Some say it means “sins of Adam and sins of the Muslims”; 2. Others say it means “past sins of your *ummah* are forgiven and their future sins will be forgiven by your intercession”; 3. Yet others say it means “your past and future *at-tarku ’awla* is forgiven”.

Besides lacking any credible basis, such interpretations fail to relate the particular sentence to the event of Treaty of °udaybiyyah.

* * *

The best interpretation that I have seen is of ‘Allãmah a§-±abã§abã’i in his *al-Mizãn.* A§-±abã§abã’i goes to the literal meaning of the words: *dhanb* which is commonly used for “sin” and *ghafara* which is commonly used for “forgiving”.

The word *dhanb* is from the verb-form *dhanaba* which means “to follow”; its noun form *dhanab* means “tail; something that follows”. So the main idea in the word *dhanb* is the concept of something following the other. “Sin” is known as “*dhanb*” because it is an act that entails evil consequence in form of Allãh’s displeasure and punishment.

The word *ghafara* actually means “to cover or conceal something” which also implies the meaning of protecting something. This word is used in its original meaning in our ¦*adīth* literature. For example, a ¦adīth say “*Ghaffir ash-shayb bi ’l-khidhãb*” which means “Cover the white hair by dyeing” or “Conceal the old age by dyeing.” “Forgiving” is known as “*ghafara*” because by forgiving, Allãh covers the evil consequence of sins, and protects the sinner from it.

With the literal meanings of the two crucial words in the verse: *dhanb* and *yaghfira*, the entire passage under discussion becomes more meaningful and relevant to the Treaty of °udaybiyya. The verses would now read as follows:

> Verily We granted thee [in the Treaty of °udaybiyya] a manifest victory; so that God may protect you from the past and future consequences of your [policy with the Meccans].

Prophet Mu¦ammad's mission had angered the idol-worshippers of Mecca to the extent that they planned to kill him and when they failed, they waged war after war against him. This had greatly limited the missionary activities of the Muslims outside Medina. With the peace-treaty of °udaybiyya, the Prophet got the chance to peacefully convey his message to all people of the Arabian Peninsula and outside it. History shows that within three years of the peace treaty of °udaybiyya, almost all of Arabia had come into the fold of Islam — the year 9 AH is known as the "Year of Delegations" since many delegations of Arab tribes came to Medina and accepted Islam. It was this peace treaty that laid the ground for the fall of Mecca at the hands of the Muslims.

So Almighty Allãh fulfilled His promise by saying that He gave a great victory through the treaty of °udaybiyya: Through this treaty, He protected the Prophet from evil consequence of unbelievers' reaction to what Mu¦ammad (s.a.w.) had done before and whatever he did after the peace treaty.

Thus the verse is connected to the treaty of °udaybiyya and our belief in the '*i¥mah* of the Prophet of Islam (may peace and blessings of Allãh be upon him) is also intact.

3rd Verse: Chapter 80 ('Abasa) 1-10:

He frowned and turned (his) back because there came to him a blind man. And what would make you know that he may purify himself; or he may be reminded and the reminding would benefit him?
But when a free from need (i.e., rich person come to you), then you address yourself to him...
But when a hard-working person comes to you (and he also fears), then you turn away from him?!

The Event: These verses refer to an incident in Mecca, when 'Abdullãh bin Umm Maktúm, a blind man, came to a gathering where the Prophet was talking to some people among whom were some leaders of Quraysh ('Atba bin Rabí'a, Abu Jahl, 'Abbãs, Ubayy bin Khalaf, Umayya bin Khalaf) were also present. When 'Abdullãh bin Umm Maktúm came to that gathering, **someone** frowned and turned away from him.

The Problem: Who frowned and turned away from the blind man? The Qur'ãn does not give the name. There are two versions of this story.

1st View: Sunni sources and a few Shī'í sources say that it was the Prophet of Islam who frowned and turned away from the blind man.

2nd View: Most Shī'í sources, following the teachings of the Imams of Ahlu 'l-Bayt (who obviously knew the Prophet better than others), say that it was one of the Umayyid leaders of Quraysh who frowned and turned away from the blind man.

* * *

We accept the second view because there is an internal proof from the Qur'ãn that it was well below the character of Prophet Mu¦ammad to behave in this way.

(a) Allãh addresses the Prophet: "*Nun*. I swear by the pen and what [the angels] write that you are not,

by the grace of your Lord, a lunatic; and that surely you shall have a perpetual reward [for your work]; and *most surely you are on the sublime [level] of morality*." (68:1-4)

This testimony about the Prophet's character was revealed after súrah al-Iqra and before súrah an-Najm; i.e., before the revelation of the verses under discussion. How can a person described so highly by Allãh allegedly behave in such a repelling manner!

(b) In the very early stage of his mission, the Prophet was clearly told how to behave in conveying his message to the people: "And warn thy nearest relatives; and *be kind to* him who follows you of *the believers*." (26:214-215) In another verse, Allãh says, "Therefore, declare openly what you have been ordered, and *turn away from the polytheists*." (15:94)

It seems improbable that a Prophet praised so highly in the previous verse and told to be kind to the believers, would frown when approached by a blind person.

(c) The character of the Prophet and his criterion of preference have historically been proved by the following event: Many early converts to Islam were the oppressed and weak people of Mecca like Bilãl, 'Ammãr, Sãlim Maula Abi °udhayfa, Ibn Mas'ûd, Miqdãd and others. The Qurayshi leaders once told the Prophet that, "Why do you sit among these people? If you turn them away from yourself, we might accept you as our leader." The Prophet refused. And Allãh confirmed the Prophet's response by revealing the following verse: "And do not drive away those who call upon their Lord at morning and evening desiring His favour. Nothing of their account falls upon you, and nothing of your account falls upon them. So if you drive them away, you will become one of the unjust. In this way, We try some of them by others. [Because of their spiritual perfection, Allah exalted those poor

persons, and thus He tries those rich people who lack faith and] who say, 'Are these [poor people] the ones upon whom Allah has been gracious to among us?' Does not Allah know very well the grateful [servants]?" (6:52-53)

In conclusion, ascribing the act of frowning and turning away from the blind man cannot be ascribed to the holy Prophet of Islam.

4th Verse: Chapter 66 (at-Ta¦rīm) Verses 1-12:

> 1. O Prophet! Why do you forbid (for yourself) what God has made lawful for you? You seek to please your wives; and God is Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful. 2. Indeed, God has made lawful for you the dissolution of your oaths (in such cases), and God (alone) is your Lord. And He is All-knowing, the Wise.
>
> 3. When the Prophet confided to one of his wives (°af¥a) a matter, but when she divulged it (to 'Ã'isha) and God apprised him about it — he made known a part of it (i.e., the talk between °af¥a and 'Ã'isha) and avoided a part of it. So when he informed her (°af¥a) about it, she said, "Who informed you of this?" He said, "Informed me, the All-Knowing, the All-Aware."
>
> 4. If you two ('Ã'isha and °af¥a) turn (in repentance) unto Allah, then indeed your hearts are inclined (to righteousness) but if you two back up each other against him, then verily God is his Protector; and Jibraīl, the most virtuous among the believers, and the angels will thereafter back him up.
>
> 5. Happly his Lord, if he (Mu¦ammad) divorces you, will give in your place wives better than you (who will be) submissive, faithful, obedient, repentant, prayerful, observers of fast, widows and virgins...

> 10. God set forth the similitude of those who disbelieve the wife of Nú¦ and the wife of Lút: they both were under two of Our righteous servants, but they were unfaithful and they (i.e., their husbands) availed them nothing against God; and it was said to them (the two wives): "Enter you both the fire with those who enter it."
> 11. God set forth the similitude of those who believe [1] the wife of Fir'awn, when she said, "O My Lord! Build for me a house in the Garden and deliver me from Fir'awn and his doing, and deliver me from the unjust people." 12. And [2] Maryam, the daughter of 'Imrãn, who guarded her chastity; and We breathed into her Our spirit (i.e., 'Isa), and she testified the truth of the words of her Lord and His scriptures, and she was of the obedient ones.

This chapter was revealed in regard to °af¥a and 'Ã'isha, the wives of the Prophet. Besides Khadījah, the only wife of the Prophet who bore child for him was Mãriya Qib§iyya, the Egyptian slave gifted to him by the Egyptian King. After the birth of Ibrãhim (the Prophet's son from Mãriya), 'Ã'isha and °af¥a became very jealous of Mãriya.

There are many views on the occasion for the revelation of this chapter. The narrations are different but most relate to the jealousy of °af¥a and 'Ã'isha against Mãriya and/or Zaynab bint Jahash. A version of the event considered authentic by some of our scholars is as follows: °af¥a entered her room and found the Prophet with Mãriya; she became very upset with the Prophet. The Prophet, in order to calm °af¥a, took an oath that he would not see Mãriya again. He also asked °af¥a to keep the issue of his oath to herself and not divulge it to anyone.

Another version says that in order to change the Prophet's love for Zaynab bint Jahash, °af¥a and

'Ã'isha made a plan that whenever the Prophet came from Zaynab, they both would say that his mouth is smelling bad—and attribute the bad smell to a drink of honey (*maghãfir*) which Zaynab always made for the Prophet. The Prophet took an oath not to partake the honey-drink that Zaynab made for him. He also asked °af¥a to keep the issue of his oath to herself and not divulge it to anyone.[12]

* * *

Did the Prophet commit a sin by making an oath that he will no longer see his slave-girl, Mãriya Qib§iyyah or no longer drink the honey-drink made by Zaynab?

The chapter as a whole is mostly directed to the attitude of the wives who conspired against the Prophet: it talks about God willingly to replace those two wives with better wives and asks them to repent. The opening verse, at most, is a friendly rebuke by God to the Prophet for imposing un-necessary deprivation upon himself. There is no prohibition in making an oath to abstain from a thing that is permissible. If a person makes such an oath and then indents to nullify it, then he is permitted to do so after paying expiation for it. (See 5:89)

So these verses cannot be used against the concept of infallibility of the Prophet of Islam, Mu¦ammad, peace be upon him and his progeny.

* * *

---

[12] For various version of the event, see a§-±abã§abã'i, *al-Mizãn fi Tafsiri 'l-Qur'ãn,* vol. 19 (Tehran: Darul Kutub, 1362 [solar]) p. 391-395; Abu 'l-Ma'lã Mawd-d¢, *Tafh¢mu 'l-Qur'ãn,* vol. 6 (Lahore: Idãra-e Tarjumãnu 'l-Qur'ãn, 1994) p. 16-17; Fakhru 'd-D¢n ar-Rãzi, *Mafãt¢¦u 'l-Ghayb,* vol. 30 (Beirut: Dãru 'l-Kutub, 1990) p. 37.

OUR ENGLISH PUBLICATIONS

1. A Lecture on Nahjul Balagha *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
2. Bibi Fatmah (a.s.) *By: M.M.Dungarsi*
3. Bilal's Bedtime Stories Part I *By: A. Sheriff / A. Aloo*
4. Bilal's Bedtime Stories Part II *By: A. Sheriff / A. Aloo*
5. Bilal's Bedtime Stories Part III *By: Zishane Fatima*
6. Basic Principles of Islam *By: Muntazir*
7. Day of Judgment *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*

8. Daily Duas of Ramadhan
9. Dua-e-Kumeil *By: Hussein A. Rahim*
10. Elements of Islamic Studies *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
11. Family life of Islam *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
12. Fast *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
13. Fadak *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
14. Four Californian Lectures *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
15. Focus On Bilal's Eye Camps
16. God: An Islamic Perspective *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
17. God of Islam *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
18. Guidance from Qur'an *By: H. Rahim & Ali Sheriff*
19. Hijab *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
20. Highlights of Bilal
21. Imamate *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
22. Inner Voice *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
23. Islam *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
24. In Defence of Islamic Laws *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
25. Imam Ali (a.s.) *By: M.M.Dungarsi*
26. Imam Hassan (a.s.) *By: M.M.Dungarsi*
27. Imam Hussein (a.s.) *By: M.M.Dungarsi*
28. Imam Ali bin Hussein (a.s.) *By: M.M.Dungarsi*
29. Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (a.s.) *By: M.Dungarsi*
30. Imam Jaffar As-Sadiq (a.s.) *By: M.M.Dungarsi*
31. Imam Mussa bin Jaffar (a.s.) *By: M.M.Dungarsi*
32. Imam Ali bin Mussa Reza (a.s.) *By: M.M.Dungarsi*
33. Imam Muhammad Taqi (a.s.) *By: M.M.Dungarsi*
34. Imam Ali Naqi (a.s.) *By: M.M.Dungarsi*
35. Imam Hassan Askari (a.s.) *By: M.M.Dungarsi*
36. Imam Zamana (a.s.) *By: Mulla Sheriff Dewji*
37. Justice of God *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
38. Leadership By Divine Apointment *By: A. Sheriff*
39. Muhammad is the Last Prophet
    By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi
40. Meaning & Origin of Shi'ism *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
41. Moral Stories Part I *By: Ahmed Sheriff*
42. Moral Stories Part II *By: Ahmed Sheriff*
43. Muwaddatul Qurba By: Syed A.Rizvi
44. Music and Its Effects *By: Ahmed Sheriff*
45. Need of Religion *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
46. On to the Right Path *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
47. Prophethood *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
48. Prophecies About The Holy Prophet of Islam in Hindu, Christian, Jewish, & Parsi Scriptures *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
49. Prophecies About The Occaltation of Imam Al-Mahdi *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*

50. Philosophy of Tawhid *By: Jafferali Aseer*
51. Prophet Yunus (a.s.) *By: Ahmed Sheriff*
52. Pork *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
53. Qur'an and Hadith *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
54. The Holy Prophet *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
55. The Ideal Islamic Government
    By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi
56. Taqiyah *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
57. The Return of Al-Mahdi (a. s.)
    By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi
58. The Charter of Rights *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
59. The Ideal Youth *By: Ahmed Sheriff*
60. The Infallibility of the Prophets in the Qur'ãn
    By: Hujjatul Islam wal Muslimeen Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi
61. Why Pray in Arabic *By: Ahmed Sheriff*
62. What a Muslim should Know and Believe
    By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi
63. Wahhabis Fitnah Exposed *By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi*
64. Your Questions Answered Vol 1
    By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi
65. Your Questions Answered Vol 2
    By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi
66. Your Questions Answered Vol 3
    By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi
67. Your Questions Answered Vol 4
    By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi
68. Your Questions Answered Vol 5
    By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi
69. Your Questions Answered Vol 6
    By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi
70. Your Questions Answered Vol 7
    By: Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi

BILAL MUSLIM MISSION OF TANZANIA
P. O. Box 20033, Dar es Salaam – Tanzania.
E-mail: bilal@cats-net.com / bilal@raha.com